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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0663  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0539  
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RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: "NIGHT OF OMNIPOTENCE" AMNESTY LIST INCLUDES SOME  
"PRISONERS OF INTEREST"

REF: ASHGABAT 0827

1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

2. (U) On October 1, the state-run newspaper, "Neutral Turkmenistan," published the list of prisoners to be pardoned on October 9, in honor of the Night of Omnipotence. Some 8,837 names appeared, along with brief details about when and where the prisoners had been sentenced. (NOTE: Approximately 84% of those released were imprisoned in 2006-2007. END NOTE.) Careful examination of the list revealed no high-profile prisoners, such as more of those arrested in connection with the 2002 attack on President Niyazov's motorcade (reftel), the two RFE/RL journalists arrested in 2006, or foreign prisoners. The imprisoned family members of some convicted government officials were to be released, and some are listed below. There is no information regarding whether an additional list will be made public closer to October 9.

3. (U) In previous years, the government had published the list only a day or two before the release, forcing families of prisoners to scramble to arrive at the various prison facilities across Turkmenistan in time to receive their newly-released relatives. Locals consider the government's decision to publish the list a week in advance an act of kindness for the families, who this time are able to plan accordingly.

4. (U) Post identified on the list the following "prisoners of interest", some of whom were imprisoned largely because they were related to former senior government officials accused of crimes. Others are high-profile individuals convicted of economic crimes. Locals consider it unlikely that any prisoners convicted of treason, such as former Foreign Minister Boris Shihmuradov, would be freed, although a relative of his may be on the list. Prisoners of interest who appeared on the list include:

-- Geldi Gurbangeldiyevich Karizov. A former chief of the Turkmen State Horse Association, "Turkmen Atlary." He was sentenced in April 2002 for a number of crimes, including negligence, abuse of official duties, and embezzlement. His personal Ahalteke horse farm was confiscated, but was later returned to his family. The Turkmen government then banned selling the horses, which led to the farm's bankruptcy and the eventual starvation of many of the horses.

-- Akjagul Sazakovna Kakayeva. The mother of Arslan Kakayev, who was jailed along with her husband in 2003 after Arslan Kakayev fled the country. He was sentenced in absentia in 2003 for allegedly embezzling \$41 million from the Central Bank. Kakayev's father was also arrested at the time, but his name did not appear on the list.

-- Sofiya Orazovna Garabayeva. The mother of Murad Garabayev, who was Kakayev's co-worker in the Central Bank. In September 2002, his mother Sofiya Garabayeva and his sister Maya Garabayeva were arrested following the investigation into Arslan Kakayev.

-- Nurmurad Akmuradovich Rejepov. Son of Akmurad Rejepov, the former head of Niyazov's Presidential Guard. Akmurad Rejepov was a longtime Niyazov insider who reportedly continued to communicate with Niyazov's son after the elder Niyazov's death, and was jailed early this year. Nurmurad Rejepov, a working-level functionary in the National Security Service, was jailed shortly thereafter.

-- Buzli Chandirovich Khodjaev. The head of a town council and a farmer's association near Dashoguz, as well as a

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respected alumnus of the Cochran Farmer Exchange Program. Khodjaev was linked to purged national security service deputy Khait Kakayev during Niyazov's rule, and was jailed as part of a well-publicized corruption crackdown. (NOTE: MNB Deputy Chairman Kakayev died in prison in April 2003. END NOTE.)

15. (U) Locally-employed staff report that former Oil and Gas Minister Yolly Gurbanmuradov, who had been moved from prison to house arrest after Berdimuhamedov's election, suffered a stroke and was taken abroad for medical treatment. This information, however, has not yet been verified.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: The amnesty was a major event in Ashgabat, since most locals seem to know someone who has been imprisoned, and it is likely to set off a huge surge in domestic travel for tens of thousands of relatives who will greet the pardoned prisoners. There is also an air of tension in its wake, as citizens wait and wonder if another list will appear, announcing the release of prisoners who simply ran afoul of Niyazov's regime. That would be a significant demonstration that this administration is breaking more fully from the past. END COMMENT.  
HOAGLAND